

University of Montana ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Mike Mansfield Speeches

Mike Mansfield Papers

9-1-1965

Vietnam: Narrowing the Issues

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches

Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "Vietnam: Narrowing the Issues" (1965). *Mike Mansfield Speeches*. 603.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/603

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD BEFORE THE DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE

Tuesday, September 28, 1965, Room S-208, The Capitol, 2:00 P.M.

The Leadership shared the general hope of an early adjournment, did the best it could to bring it about and was unsuccessful. The understanding which has been shown at this failure to meet the tentative adjournment goal of "around Labor Day" is deeply appreciated. The cooperation of the committee chairmen and the members in this connection is also appreciated. I am most grateful that the cooperation is continuing, to the end that we may wind up this session in an orderly fashion.

This will be, I hope, the last meeting of the Democratic Conference for the first session of the 89th Congress. It has been an exceptional session. You who made it so are well aware of that fact so there is no need to dwell upon its achievements. Difficulty with adjournment may yet obscure the contribution which this Congress has made but it will in no way diminish its importance to the nation.

I want to say in connection with 14-B that the Leadership has no intention of treating this item any differently than the other major controversies with which, previously, it has had to cope. It will not pursue exercises in procedural futility. That was avoided in connection with civil rights, with legislative reapportionment and any number of other controversial measures. Insofar as the Leadership is concerned, the treatment of 14-B will be in accord with past practices. The Leadership will be prepared to propose orderly procedures but, in this as in any other matter, it is the Senate as a whole which disposes.

COPY

In the light of the uncertain situation on 14-B, I do not know when adjournment can be anticipated and venture no further predictions. But I do know that it is not too early, even now, to be looking beyond this session to the work of the Senate in the second session of the 89th Congress.

The President has stated that "we look forward to the Congress being able to get out of here early next year. I would say certainly far ahead of the fiscal year in June . . ." I hope that will be the case and recent experience obviously suggests a prudent caution. I welcome and applaud the President's view that he does "not expect anything like the volume of substantive legislation next year," from the Congress.

The scope of achievements in the last eight or nine months makes any repetition of the volume of significant legislation which has been cleared in the present session not only unlikely but, in my judgment, undesirable. That is not to say that during the 2nd session we may expect nothing in the way of proposals for new initiating legislation in the President's messages or from Senators themselves. Even less does it mean that we will be able to take it easy for the first half of 1966. What is indicated, it seems to me, is that barring some extraordinary crisis in foreign policy the main concern of the Senate in the second session will be the perfection, the elaboration and the refinement of the basic legislation which underpins major federal programs and, particularly, the legislation which has been put into the statute books during the past three or four years. Indeed, that is likely to be the main concern not only for the next session but ^{for} some time to come.

COPY

It is with that expectation in mind that I would like to suggest to the Conference that thought should be given in the weeks ahead to the frequently mentioned but generally under-exercised Congressional function of legislative oversight. I would suggest, in particular, that the Committee Chairmen consult with their committee members prior to the next session, on how this function may be more effectively and fully exercised, within the scope of the Committee's assigned responsibilities.

It is hardly possible to set in legislative motion so many new federal approaches to the nation's problems--as we have done in recent years--without leaving a number of gaps and any number of rough edges, over-extensions and overlaps. The best time to catch these shortcomings, it seems to me, is before they become solidified by repetition into the administrative practices of the departments and agencies. The Executive Branch, itself, under the eye of the President and his Administration, will, of course, be alert to these problems. In the Senate, the Appropriations Committee and the Government Operations Committee will, of course, be concerned with them.

In any event it seems to me unreasonable to expect too much in the way of examination of the evolution of these new programs from the Committees which I have mentioned. They are necessarily immersed in the current activity of the government and in specific problems as they may arise or may be brought to light. They can hardly be expected to take on the immense additional task of oversight in connection with the federal

COPY

program of great magnitude which have been initiated. It is the legislative committees, it seems to me, in consultation with the appropriations and government operations committees to be sure, to which we must largely look for the function of oversight to be exercised in a thorough fashion.

The committees which are responsible for the initiating legislation on the major programs should not merely sit and wait, it seems to me, for the departments and agencies to present them with legislative suggestions for corrective or elaborative legislation. It would be most desirable, in my judgment, that the Senate, itself, take a measure of legislative initiative. If it is to do so, it is essential that the committees formulate specific approaches to the oversight of some of the major undertakings of the past several years with a view to bringing in to the Senate during the next session, such corrective, contractive, or elaborative legislation as may be indicated.

The Leadership would hope to meet with the Committee Chairmen in January to see what has been developed and to help in any way it can to advance this work. A contribution from the Senate along these lines could be of great help to the President and the cooperation of his Administration is to be anticipated.

I would point out in this connection that the Armed Services Committee under the distinguished Chairmanship of Senator Russell has exercised a consistent oversight in military affairs for many years and this has redounded to the good of the armed services themselves as well as to the credit of the Senate. In that connection there has been a maximum of Senate contribution to the effective design and execution of public policy in matters of defense.

COPY

The Senate can and should make every effort to keep the major federal programs on the right track--to keep them there, or to return them to it--as the case may be. That, too, is a way of serving the nation's needs, no less vital perhaps than was the enactment of these programs in the first place.

COPY

Before opening the meeting to discussion, I want to address myself briefly to the extraordinary service of the younger members of the Conference during the current year--younger in length of service and, in most cases, in terms of years.

In all the time I have been in Congress, I do not recall a greater individual and collective contribution in such a short period than that which has been made by our younger colleagues. They have been seen and heard and in a most responsible and effective fashion. They have acted, in every sense, as leaders of the nation which every member becomes on entering the Senate.